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Missouri TCD Task Force Meets to Improve Heart Care Response

State's Time Critical Diagnosis Task Force integral part in improving heart attack survival and recovery rates

Jefferson City, MO (February 14, 2008) – As the nation's medical profession recognizes February as American Heart Month, Missouri's leading medical experts are coming together to do their part to address the issue. Missouri's Time Critical Diagnosis Task Force will hold its third meeting Friday, February 15, 2008 in Jefferson City.

The Task Force is developing recommendations for a statewide emergency response system for victims of stroke and ST-Segment Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI), a form of heart attack. Dr. George M. Kichura, medical director of the Cardiac Catheterization Lab at St. John's Mercy Heart Hospital in St. Louis, is the Task Force's STEMI technical advisor. Kichura presented best practices for emergency response and treatment to the Task Force last month.

"This Task Force is about bringing together the state's leading experts," explained Dr. William Jermyn, the EMS medical director for the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. "In addition to Dr. Kichura, we have representatives from numerous state medical and professional organizations working in a collaborative fashion to develop recommendations for the best possible emergency response system for Missouri."

While Missouri's heart disease and stroke death rates are declining, heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the state. Stroke ranks third. Dr. Scott Duff, a specialist in vascular neurology and the medical director of the CoxHealth Stroke Team in Springfield, Missouri, is the stroke technical advisor for the Task Force.

To achieve optimal recovery and higher survival rates, heart attack victims should receive angioplasty treatment within 90 minutes or less of symptom onset. However, according to a 2006 *New England Journal of Medicine* study, only 35% of hospitals in the United States achieve the optimum door-to-angioplasty time frame. For every additional 30 minutes a patient goes without receiving angioplasty, the rate of mortality increases exponentially.

The Cardiac Catheterization Lab at St. John's Mercy Hospital in St. Louis has "door-to-balloon" goal of less than 90 minutes. Dr. Kichura and his team at the Lab have been reaching

or doing better than that goal since its July 2006 implementation, and he hopes the TCD Task Force's new research and recommendations will further their efforts.

The goal of the TCD Task Force is to make recommendations to assist the department in their goal of reducing incident-to-treatment times for both STEMI and stroke patients. The recommended system will provide patients with the right care, at the right place, in the right amount of time. Ensuring direct transport to the area hospital best prepared to immediately treat STEMI and stroke patients will drastically improve time to treatment for STEMI sufferers, subsequently improving recovery and decreasing mortality.

The Time Critical Diagnosis Task Force was formed by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the Missouri Foundation for Health. The Task Force will meet February 15 at 9:30 a.m. at the Governor's Office Building in Jefferson City.

About DHSS: *The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services protects and promotes quality of life and health for all Missourians by developing and implementing programs and systems that provide: information and education, effective regulation and oversight, quality services and surveillance of diseases and conditions.*

About MFH: *Established in 2000, MFH is the largest non-governmental funder of community health activities in the state. It is dedicated to serving the uninsured, underinsured and underserved in 84 Missouri counties and the City of St. Louis. For more information about MFH, visit www.mffh.org.*

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